



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

Meeting Date: October 17, 2019

Agenda Item: Drought Closures and Status

Action Needed: Informational

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Minutes

Background:

Administrative Rules adopted in 2008 provide the department the authority to issue angling restrictions or closures, through consultation with the district Fish and Wildlife Commissioner, when temperature or flow criteria are met during drought conditions (ARM 12:5:5: Angling Restrictions and Fishing Closures). ARM 12.5.502(2) requires the department to report to the commission any angling restrictions or fishing closures implemented or lifted pursuant to this rule. This past summer there was one angling restriction and one fishing closure implemented on the Big Hole River in R3. An angling restriction from 2 p.m. to midnight from Notch Bottom FAS to the confluence with the Beaverhead River was implemented on August 8, when water temperatures reached or exceeded 73 degrees for more than three consecutive days. The restriction was lifted on September 12 following three consecutive days with maximum daily water temperatures below 70 degrees. A full closure was implemented on August 31 from Saginaw Bridge on Skinner Meadow Road to the North Fork Big Hole River when river flows dropped below 20 cfs. The closure was lifted on September 25 when flows exceeded 40 cfs for seven consecutive days. Both the angling restriction and closure was guided by criteria outlined in the Big Hole Watershed Committee Drought Plan.

Public Involvement Process & Results:

Public outreach informing the public of the restriction and closure included signs at all access points, press releases, and social media. The Big Hole Watershed Committee also assisted with public outreach and provided information. Similar outreach was used when the restriction and closure was lifted.

Proposed Motion:

No action needed.